

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – OCTOBER 2003

General Summary. October temperatures averaged 52.4° or 1.5° above normal while precipitation totaled 1.00 inches or 1.52 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 54th warmest and 15th driest October among 131 years of state records.

Temperatures. The month opened with unseasonably cold weather. A hard freeze was recorded across most of Iowa on the morning of the 2nd when Mason City reported a low of 16°. This was the lowest temperature recorded so early in the fall in Iowa since Elkader reported a low of 15° on October 2, 1974. Temperatures climbed back above normal by the afternoon of the 4th with daytime highs reaching the 80's somewhere in Iowa on every day from the 4th through the 10th. Cooler than normal weather briefly returned from the 14th through the 17th with Mason City reporting a low of 23° on the 16th. Above normal temperatures returned for the 18th through the 24th. Clear skies and very dry air allowed for huge swings in temperature. At Spencer, for example, a morning low of 35° on the 19th was followed by an afternoon high of 89°. Glenwood and Red Oak reported the month's highest temperatures with 90° readings on the 19th. These were Iowa's latest 90° readings since Sioux Rapids reached 90° on October 30, 1950. Temperatures averaged below normal during most of the last week of the month. Mason City reported October's lowest temperature with a 15° reading on the morning of the 27th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 33% less than last October and 12% less than normal. So far this heating season degree day totals are running 19% less than last season and 9% less than normal.

Precipitation. Most of October's precipitation came from two mid-month storm systems on the 11th and 13th-14th. Nearly all of Iowa received between one-quarter and one-half inch of rain on the 11th. The second storm system brought little or no rain to far northwest Iowa but deposited one-half to three-fourths of an inch on much of the southeastern half of the state. The season's first snow flurries were reported in far northwest Iowa on the night of the 25th. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 0.17 inches at Estherville to 2.15 inches at Keokuk (still 0.89 inches below normal).

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